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ABSTRACT

Noting that Argentina's recent history is particularly useful for analysis of the varying effects that differing government styles can have on a single mass communication system, a study compared Argentine (specifically Buenos Aires) television's 1979 programming schedule, prepared during a military dictatorship, with recent schedules prepared under democracy. The data were evaluated in order to test two hypotheses: (1) programming schedules prepared under conditions of greater freedom of speech and freedom of expression, when compared to those prepared in 1979 under military rule, would exhibit greater reliance on domestic, Latin American or Spanish-language programming and correspondingly fewer American- or First World- produced programs; and (2) the programming schedules would show a trend toward increasingly more use of domestic, Latin American or Spanish-language programming as the Argentine audiences gain more experience with free expression. Findings supported the first hypothesis; however, the second hypothesis was not supported. Findings suggest that further research would benefit from expanding samples to include programming schedules for cities of the country's "interior," and evaluating the content of Argentina's increasingly widespread cable television system. (Two tables of data are included.) (NH)

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GOVERNMENT STYLE AS A FACTOR IN INFORMATION FLOW: Television programming in Argentina, 1979-1989

by Jeffrey Alan John
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Analysis of the patterns of international communication flow is a recognized avenue of study. However, reports have mostly described this flow rather than probe factors in the amount and direction of information flow.

This paper discusses government style as a factor in international information flow. The Argentine television 1979 programming schedule, prepared during a military dictatorship, was compared with recent schedules prepared under democracy. It was hypothesized that 1) Programming schedules prepared under conditions of free expression, compared to those prepared under military rule, would include more domestic, Latin American or Spanish-language programming and correspondingly fewer "First World"-produced programs; and 2) Schedules would show a trend toward increasing use of domestic, Latin American or Spanish-language programming.

Analysis of the data indicated a statistically significant difference between the content of 1979 programming and recent schedules. However, data does not indicate a trend toward progressively fewer programs imported from "First World" nations.

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As we witness almost daily advances in technology we are constantly reminded of the complexity of the global communication process. It is nevertheless essential that researchers strive to recognize and describe the many elements which interact in the communication processes.

One recognized avenue of study is analysis of the patterns of communication flow among nations of the world. Reports in this area have been both influential and controversial, as conclusions have touched political and economic philosophies. However, many have focused on philosophical rather than empirical bases, and it is apparent research in this area continues to evolve.

An elemental and comprehensive set of hypotheses regarding the international flow of information was provided in the early 1970s by Al Hester, who suggested that a hierarchical structure among nations determined the quantity and direction of information flow.[1] Hester hypothesized that information flows from "high" ranking nations to "low" ranking nations, and that it flows among nations with cultural, historic and economic affinities.

Although Hester suggested methods for testing these

hypotheses, data collection until relatively recently described the flow of information rather than probe factors which determine the amount and direction of information flow. Tapio Varis, in his 1974 analysis[2] and a follow-up 1984 study[3], described an international flow of television programming consisting largely of entertainment and moving from a few exporting countries--principle among them the United States and to a lesser extent Western Europe and Japan--to the rest of the world.

In his earlier study Varis found an economic basis for this flow--"The production of television programs for international distribution is primarily aimed at making money," he said[4]--and in the later study he described the situation as "serious inadequacy and imbalance."[5] Such data were cited as evidence that imports of media products are a driving force in a "cultural imperialism" defined by UNESCO's Mustapha Masmoudi in the now-familiar "New World Information Order."

Subsequent scholarly inquiry has, however, questioned the extent and effects of the imbalance. By the mid-1980s scholars, while recognizing a continuing flow of media products (particularly television programming) from the developed North to the less-developed South, were also recognizing that a variety of factors beyond the general categories identified by Hester have an effect on this flow. In a Communcation Research issue devoted in its entirety to media flow in Latin America, Livia Antola and Everett Rogers looked at the processes and motivations for flow of television programming, and found a trend in Latin America "to

produce more and import less."[6] Antola and Rogers noted television programming flow is promoted by availability of certain technical equipment, such as translation dubbing facilities, a condition they identified as a subset of structural conditions defined by Jorge Reina Schement, et al., as necessary to the flow of television programs.[7] More recently, Alexis S. Tan, et al. reported the cultural impact of American programming imported to the Philippines was muted by content which did not match the indigenous cultural beliefs of the populuation[8], and Christine Ogan observed that local cultural values in Turkey were a factor in dissemination of domestically produced and imported videocassette recordings.[9]

Ogan also mentions briefly the Turkish government's attempts to control legally licensed works and works prohibited by censorship, and this hints at a factor in international flow of information which has received surprisingly little attention. Given the opposing philosophies at the core of the "cultural imperialism" question--the free flow of information espoused by capitalism-oriented developed nations, versus a new world information order sought by less-developed nations in reaction to a perceived dependent status fostered by imperialism--the effect of government styles on the processes would seem to be a considerable factor.

Jorge Reina Schement and Everett Rogers suggest as much, noting "Although most international media flows are profit-motivated, some are caused by political forces,"[10] and they cite this as one of the useful directions for future research. In

addition, Sergio Mattos directly investigated the Brazilian government's influence on its substantial domestic television production industry. He observed that the government was the significant internal force for television development, and in turn "internal conditions in Brazil have had a stronger influence on television's development than have external factors."[11] In a study of television in Chile, Valerio Fuenzalida noted the change in government from representative participation to more restrictive military rule under Augusto Pinochet resulted in both quantitative and qualitative changes in programming.[12]

Fuenzalida did not address the effect of programming change on information flow, but he did note a decrease in the amount of informational programming and discussion-format programs. Antola and Rogers, however, recognized the implications of government styles, in Chile and elsewhere in Latin America.

> Censorship and government regulations particular to each country...affect import/export flows in Latin America. Generally these regulations inhibit imports from other Latin American countries and encourage U.S. imports. For example, in Chile only one hour of foreign television from Mexico, Brazil, or Venezuela can be shown per channel per day, but U.S. programs are not so limited. In Argentina, two Mexican telenovelas that had been shown in the afternoon were censored and moved to a night slot after 10.[13]

Discussion of Argentina's experience is particularly useful in light of research by Edmond Rogoff into flow of television programming into that country.[14] Rogoff, in a 1984 case study, pursued a media imperialism hypothesis by analyzing the extent of Western media penetration into the 1979 television schedule of Buenos Aires, Argentina. His study focused on a four-week sample of TV Guia of Buenos Aires (a TV Guide clone), and resulted in

data showing considerable penetration of U.S. programming.

In reporting that study, Rogoff suggested the possibility that nationalistic fervor had increased the amount of local programming provided for Latin American audiences during the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, this trend "reversed itself consistently following the seizure of power in many Latin American countries by rightist-oriented groups, often military," he said.[15]

Rogoff's data from 1979 provide an interesting opportunity to compare Argentine programming at that time with current schedules. The comparison is useful because of the vast differences between the Argentine government in power when the Rogoff study sample was created, and now.

Argentina's recent history is particularly useful for analysis of the varying effects that differing government styles can have on a single mass communication system. In the space of the past 15 years, the country has moved from democratically elected--albeit ineffective--rule to repressive military control, and back to democracy.

The Argentine military seized control of the government in 1976, in response to a rising pattern of violent internal strife, including terrorist bombings and kidnappings. The military government's solution was the "Act Fixing the Purpose and Basic Objectives for the Process of National Reorganization," more commonly known as "The Process," which called for a renewed set of values in order to rebuild society. In reality, The Process involved sinister repression of dissent through threat and intimidation. In the effort to "eradicate subversion" (as the

military governments delicately put it), an estimated 10,000 people, including 84 journalists and 107 lawyers, as well as intellectuals, artists, dissenters, and in fact many people only suspected of associating with dissenters, were "disappeared." Daniel Poneman described the period: "People were afraid to speak, to walk the streets, to petition the government, to report crimes to police."[16]

Mass media of the period were of course not immune to the effects of the repression. One Argentine who experienced "The Process" in Buenos Aires described television of the time as "flat as a pancake."[17]

This paper reports the results of a study in which the Argentine television 1979 programming schedule--a television schedule prepared in the midst of Argentina's period of military rule--was compared with 1987, 1988 and 1989 programming schedules, which have been broadcast in an atmosphere of democracy. Specifically, the data were evaluated in order to test the hypotheses that 1) Programming schedules prepared under conditions of greater freedom of speech and freedom of expression, when compared to those prepared in 1979 under military rule, would exhibit greater reliance on domestic, Latin American or Spanish-language programming and correspondingly fewer American- or First World-produced programs; and that 2) The programming schedules would show a trend toward increasingly more use of domestic, Latin American or Spanish-language programming as the Argentine audiences gain more experience with free expression.

Confirmation of these hypotheses would provide evidence that

government control (or fear of government reprisal) is at least one factor which contributed to the domination of First World-originated programming seen in Rogoff's 1979 sample of Argentine television.

METHOD

Rogoff, in his 1984 study, reviewed a four-week sample of television programming in Buenos Aires, as listed in TV Guia. His sample listed programming in October and November, 1979, on channels 7,9, 11 and 13 in Buenos Aires, and channel 2, which originates 35 miles from Buenos Aires in La Plata and broadcasts over the general metropolitan area.

A direct comparison with recent scheduling is possible because the essential elements for research have remained constant. With the exception of a recent and supposedly temporary reduction in the total amount of programming hours available daily, the number of television broadcast options available in Buenos Aires has remained fixed. Three of the five channels continue to be controlled by the government, although there is pressure to return ownership to the private sector.[18]

Buenos Aires itself is the hub of Argentina, with a population of more than 10 million, roughly one-third of the population of the entire country. Rogoff in 1984 estimated the number of television sets in Buenos Aires at 250 per thousand population, a figure comparable with First World countries.[19]

Whereas Rogoff evaluated schedules from four weeks in the autumn of 1979, the study reported here reviewed two weeks of

programming from exactly eight years later, October and December of 1987; the last two weeks of October, 1988; and three weeks of programming from February and March of 1989. Rogoff noted he found an extensive sample period was unnecessary because there was almost no variation in programming from week to week. "On a four-week or even an eight-week basis, the tables will show such little variation that they will become indistinguishable from one another," Rogoff reported.[20] The same pattern continued in the recent samples.

As in the 1984 study, elements of the daily television schedules from TV Guia for 1987 and 1989 samples were tabulated according to their listed, or apparent, origin. (TV Guia in many citations notes the country that is the source of a non-domestic program; other programs, especially those of U.S. origin, are familiar titles). The 1988 sample was drawn from the television listings of La Nacion, an internationally respected Buenos Aires newspaper which virtually replicates the style of TV Guia's listings. These sources indicated the hours alotted daily to imports and domestic programming, and charts which resulted were used to develop an average day's TV schedule for each sample period.

Weekend programming, with its more irregular schedule, was evaluated separately from the weekday schedule and is not included in this report.

FINDINGS

Analysis of the data from 1979, 1987, 1988 and 1989 Buenos Aires television schedules indicates a substantial difference

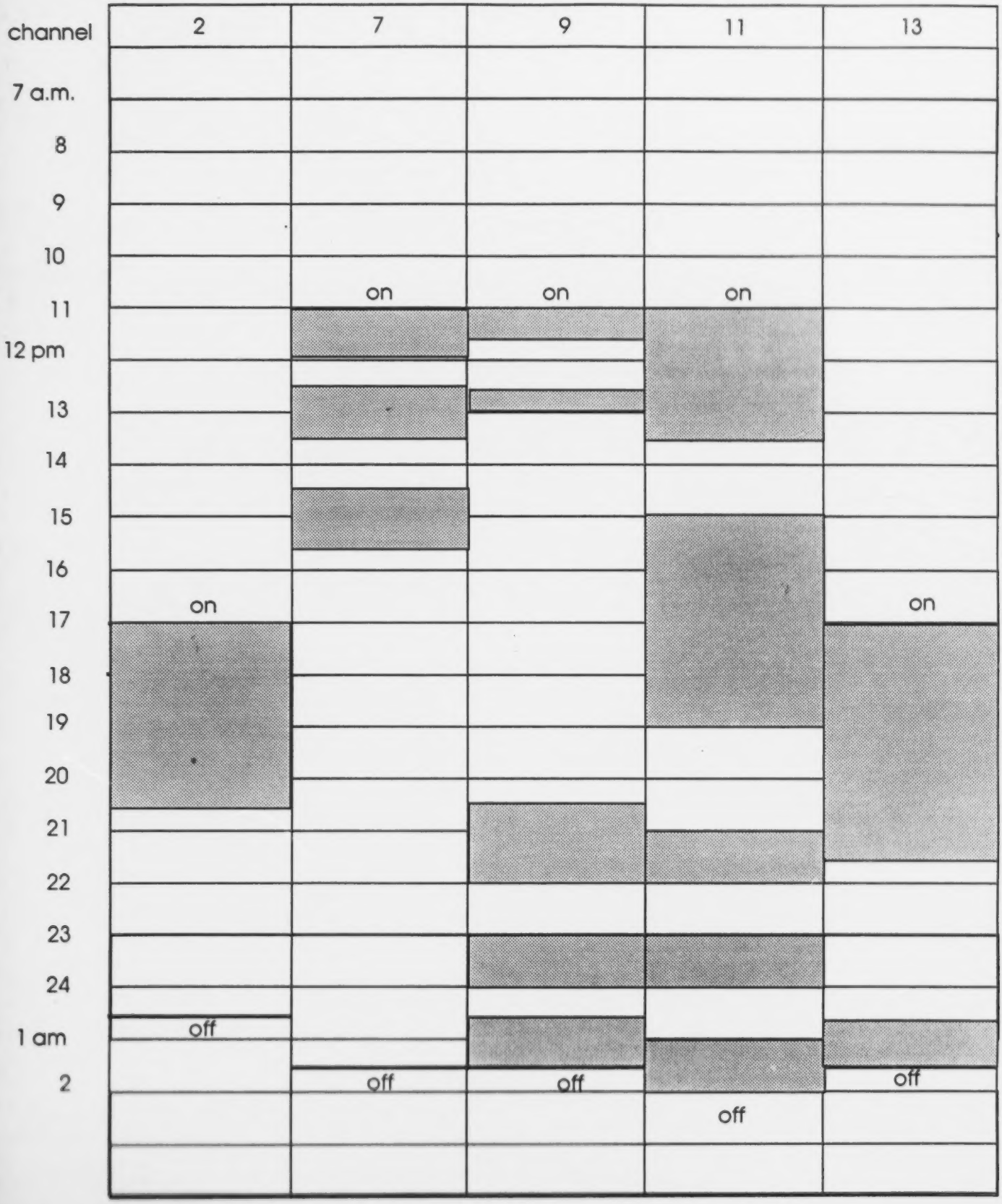
between the programming aired under conditions of a military dictatorship and programming broadcast under conditions of democratic government. However, the data does not indicate a trend toward progressively fewer programs imported from the so-called "First World" nations.

Rogoff, in compiling the mean hours given to domestic programming and imported programming in his 1979 sample, found the day which most closely conformed to these averages--his "nearest-to-average" day--was Tuesday, October 9, 1979. Data from each of the more recent sample periods yielded comparable totals from schedules for 1987 and 1988. The actual day which most closely resembles the averages from these samples was Monday, December 28. (See 1987 nearest-to-average-day schedule chart.)

In 1989, however, a combination of natural and economic factors altered the broadcasting schedule and blurred what otherwise might have been more directly comparable statistics. A severe drought in the Argentine summer of 1988-1989 drastically reduced the country's hydroelectric power generation capacity and that, combined with mechanical difficulties in the nation's nuclear-powered generating facilities, forced routine "brown-outs" in Buenos Aires. As a result of this energy crisis, television stations reduced the programming day to a period beginning at 6 p.m. and ending at about 2 a.m. (See 1989 nearest-to-average television schedule.) Thus the total available television time in Buenos Aires was reduced by about 50 percent, compared with 1979, 1987 and 1988 schedules.

However, the percentage of imports in the total programming

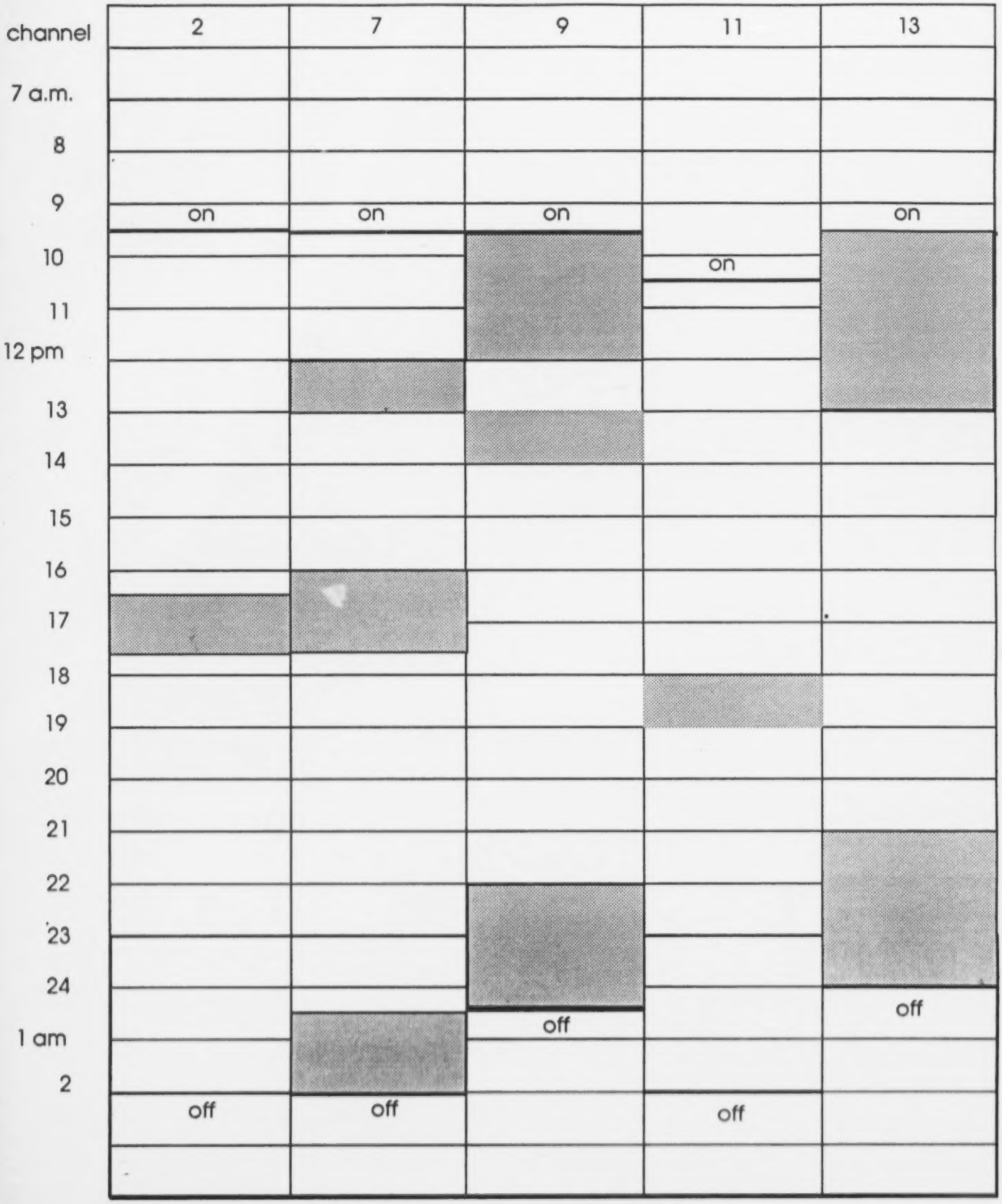
1979 schedule
Nearest to average day: Tues., Oct. 9



Source: Rogoff (1984)

1987 schedule

Nearest to average day: Mon., Dec. 28



1989 schedule

Nearest to average day: Wed., March 8

channel	2	7	9	11	13
7 a.m.					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12 pm					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18			all channels on at 6 p.m.		
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					
1 am					
2					
	off	off	off	off	off

imported programming

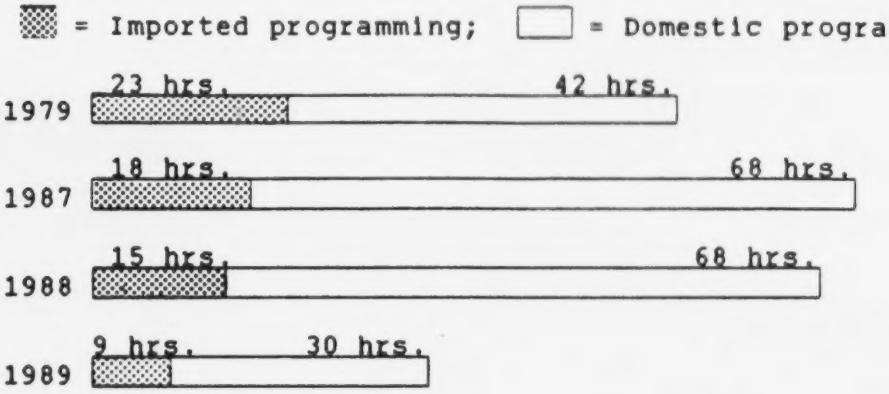
mix remained consistent in all samples broadcast under conditions of democracy, and analysis of totals from weekday programming in 1979, 1987, 1988 and 1989 indicates that in the past 10 years Latin American programming has made substantial inroads into the "average" daily schedule. In Rogoff's 1979 data 23 programming hours, of the total of 65 available on all five channels during the average weekday, were filled with programs imported from the First World, a total of 35.4 percent. By the sample period in the last months of 1987, the total air time had increased to an average of 86 hours per day (largely as a result of increased hours for channel 2), with an average of 18 hours, or 21.4 percent, imported. For the last two weeks of October, 1988, the average day's total was 82.5 hours, with 15 hours, or 18 percent, imported. Figures for February and March of 1989 indicate that although the total programming day had been drastically reduced, by fiat, to an average total of about 40 hours per day, the percentage of First World programming imports remained relatively steady, at 22.7 percent. (See Table 1)

Rogoff found that in the 1979 schedule there were few hours when at least one station of the five did not carry some American programming, and this pattern was even more pronounced during prime time. In addition, at 6:30 p.m. on some days in 1979, U.S.-made programs were being aired across the dial, on all five channels. Overall, all channels offered about the same proportion of imported material. (See 1979 nearest-to-average day.)

The 1987 schedule indicated Latin American or Spanish-

TABLE 1

Comparison of imports to domestic Argentine programming
(Total hours, average day's schedules 1979-1989)



language programming filled many of the slots formerly held by U.S. programs. (See 1987 most-near-average program schedule.) The 6:30 time slot, for example, was filled by Argentine or Latin American programming on all but channel 11. Perhaps most important, channel 13 in the 1987 sample provided only three hours of U.S. programming for the entire week, and listed that in TV Guia as a special attraction. Channel 7 also showed relatively few imported programs, other than late-night films.

The 1988 and 1989 schedules continued that pattern. No time frame was dominated by imported programming, and some channels--especially channel 2--demonstrated an apparent lack of interest in imported programming. During the 1989 sample, several channels scheduled no First-World programming at all on some days.

In order to test for statistical significance in the change among the sample schedules, the total hours devoted to imports and domestic programming in an average day of the 1979 schedule were compared to the mean of daily totals from the 1987, 1988 and 1989 samples, using the Chi-square test. Results were significant at the .05 level for cross-tabulations of the full-day schedules of 1987 and 1988 compared individually with the 1979 schedule; when an "average" day from those two years was compared with the 1979 "average" day (See Table 2); and even when an "average" day was computed from all three schedules broadcast under free-speech conditions and compared with the "average" day under authoritarian

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TABLE 2
Cross-tabulation of average day's schedule contents (Latin American/Spanish language or U.S./First World) by government under military rule (1979) and democracy (1987-'88 mean).

	1979	1987/'88
Latin Am./ Spanish	42 hrs.	68 hrs.
U.S./ 1st World	23	17

Chi-square = 4.54, df = 1, p = .033

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conditions. Only the comparison between the full 1979 broadcast day and the dehydrated 1989 schedule failed to show a statistically significant change.

According to Rogoff, the imported programs televised in 1979 were often productions from the late 1960s and early 1970s. A

partial list included such programs as "Batman," "I Dream of Jeannie," "Bewitched," "The Six Million Dollar Man," "Bonanza," "Kojak," and "Little House on the Prairie." The 1987 schedule, according to TV Guia, continued to include "Little House," along with "Cosby," "Webster," "The 700 Club" religious program, and the cartoon "Transformers." The 1988 schedule added "Miami Vice" in prime time and more than three hours nightly of U.S. programming (including "Eight Is Enough" and "Fantasy Island") in a late-night schedule on channel 13, and the 1989 schedule includes such older fare from the United States as "The Untouchables," "The Incredible Hulk," and "Mission Impossible," as well as more recent episodes of "Cagney and Lacey," "Dynasty," and the British comedy "Benny Hill."

CONCLUSIONS

William Hachten, in an analysis of government and the press in Africa, described an authoritarian regime as characterized by "near-complete government control of all instruments of mass communication,"[21] and it is apparent that the Argentina of 1979 fitted that description. The data presented in this report illustrates the impact of that government style on the television schedule available to the population.

Comparison of the schedule prepared under authoritarian conditions with schedules available under democratic conditions supports the first hypothesis: There are substantially more domestic programs, and fewer programs imported from the U.S. and western Europe, in all the more recent schedules. However, the second hypothesis was not supported: The percentage of imported programming dropped from more than 35 percent in 1979 to about 22

percent in 1987, and although it been further reduced to about 18 percent a year later, the proportion of imports increased when the television schedule was reduced in 1989. Thus there is no apparent strong trend to move progressively away from imports.

Recognition of the first hypothesis implies that political forces are at least one factor in the international flow of media products, as suggested by Schement and Rogers. In the case of Argentina, the flow of imported programs increased under a military dictatorship, perhaps because television programmers--employees of the government--sought "safe" innocuous productions. Antola and Rogers note that in the same time frame talented actors left Argentina as the government limited salaries[22] and, as experience now tells us, threatened free expression.

Perhaps an even more telling observation is the content of individual programs. Fuenzalida observed that after the military assumed control in Chile, the number of fiction and variety shows increased, while the number of information programs decreased. "Discussion programs exploring a particular subject and exchanging viewpoints are all but absent," he said.[23] This is, of course, domestic programming; the current Argentine schedule includes such programs as "A Media Luz," a news discussion program on channel 2, and "Historias De Las Argentina Secreta," a news-documentary review, on channel 7.

Of course, as a government can discourage discussion and encourage soft fiction, it can also encourage a sense of national pride and culture, as Rogoff and other researchers have noted. Yet even in this sense, government would act as a controlling

factor, limiting external programming in order to promote national goals.

The 1979-1989 schedule comparison, with its lack of a trend showing less reliance on imports, is perhaps a troubling indication of Argentina's current situation. Although it is important to note the percentage of imports remains at a number lower than the 1979 figures, the truncated 1989 schedule nevertheless is nearly one quarter imports, even after losing a daytime schedule laden with American and Japanese cartoon programs for children. It seems that either Argentine evening programmers continue to rely on some imports, or that low-priced imports are desireable in hard economic times. Neither option is positive for a country struggling to redefine itself as a stable entity.

Given the observations in this report, future research is indicated in several areas. In study of Argentina, researchers may wish to expand the samples. Programming schedules are available in Argentina for Cordoba and Rosario, cities of the country's "interior," and these may yield interesting data. In addition, this study did not evaluate the content of Argentina's increasingly widespread cable television system, which includes both the U.S. broadcast network channels and U.S. motion picture selections. Given the system's increasing popularity, its contents may provide an array of import options far more numerous than available through broadcast options alone.

-END-

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